



**So, I looked for someone ... who
would stand in the gap before
me on behalf of the land**

WEEK FIVE - MOSES

Most of us know who Moses was: the baby in the bulrushes, brought up as a prince by Pharaoh's daughter, ran away at the age of 40 having killed an Egyptian, became a shepherd and married Zipporah, a daughter of Jethro. She bore him two sons, the first one names Gershon (meaning, *I have been a stranger in a foreign land*), and Eleazer (meaning, *God is my help*). For forty years Moses remained out in the desert with his family until God spoke to him from the burning bush. Subsequently he and Aaron went at God's bidding to tell Pharaoh to **'Let my people go!'** There followed the many plagues sent by God on the land of Egypt until finally, Pharaoh agreed to let the Israelites go.

Following the last plague, the death of the firstborn of Egypt, the Egyptians gave the Israelites whatever they wanted, flocks, clothing, articles of gold and silver anything to get them out of the country.

God then did the miracle of getting some 6,000 people, plus animals and goods, through the Red Sea on dry land.

Exodus 14: 26-29: *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.*

v. 31 And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Read: Exodus 32

Before we look in more detail at chapter 32, let's backtrack three months because that's how much time had passed since God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt and to Mount Sinai. It didn't take the Israelites long to start complaining, a very human trait!

First, it was lack of water. They came to a place called Marah, the name meaning *bitter*, and the water was just that. However, God told Moses to take a particular tree and throw it into the water, and it became sweet. After that they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees and that's where they camped.

- How often do we experience this? We complain to God about something and get quite agitated only to find that had we been patient we would know that God had already answered our prayers. The verse in Psalm 46:10 says, "*Be still and know that I am God*". Do you find it difficult to trust God to meet your needs?

In chapter 16 they complained about the lack of food and so God sent them heavenly food, manna, every day except the Sabbath. They were not to collect more than they needed because it would go bad, but the day before the Sabbath they could collect twice the portion so that it lasted two days.

- This again was a question of trust. Some of them couldn't believe that more would be there the next day and collected way more than they needed. Of course, it went mouldy but, as promised, the following day there was more.

In chapter 17 it was back to complaints about water and when Moses struck the rock and water came out and they were, for the moment, satisfied.

- It is an important lesson to learn that God does what he says he will do. Always carefully read the scriptures so that we can understand how faithful God is to his promises.

We read in chapter 19 that they came to Mount Sinai and camped there. It was here that Moses '*went up to God*' and God called him from the mountain. God said to tell the Israelites that if they would obey him, they would become his special treasure. They would become a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation. Moses shared with the people what God had said.

- What was the response of the people in verse 8? When God speaks, we do well to listen. Do you make time to sit and listen to God? Prayer is a two-way communication between us and God and whilst we often have plenty to say, do we stop and give God a chance to respond?
- God demonstrated his presence with thunder and lightning. Sometimes though, God speaks in a still small voice so that we must carefully listen to his words.

The people came outside of the camp to the foot of the mountain where God called Moses to come up again. It was then that God gave the Ten Commandments and many laws covering various aspects of their lives. Moses ascended and descended the mountain probably seven or eight times as he related God's instructions to the people.

On the last time, he remained for 40 days. It took only that time for the Israelites to make a huge mistake, aided and abetted by, of all people, Aaron.

- What did the people want Aaron to do for them?
- As we read the verses of this chapter, we are surely astonished at the speed in which they changed their focus from the holy God to one made of gold, verses 3 to 6.
- Read verses 7 to 10 and then again.
- How faithful and steadfast to the teachings of God's word are we? Are we easily persuaded that other ideas could be more exciting or helpful? Remember what David says in Psalm 119:105 *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* If we want help and direction, there is only one sure place to get it.

Psalm 106:23 *So he (God) said he would destroy them— had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach (gap) before him to keep his wrath from destroying them.*

- Think about all the wonderful things God had done for the people and how they rewarded him. Those of us who have had children have no doubt asked them at some point why they were being so disobedient given all that had been done for them. God's anger was certainly unleashed, that is until Moses pleaded with him on behalf of the people.
- What were the arguments Moses brought to God to persuade him against destroying the Israelites?
- Of what promises does he remind God?
- What was the response of Moses when Joshua heard the noise in the camp and told Moses and insisted he must return immediately return to the people.
- Do you think there was something symbolic in the breaking of the tablets on which were written the commandments?

That verse in Psalm 106 is powerful and reminds us again of how Jesus stood in the gap for us. God wants each of us to be willing to intercede in prayer when we see a gap appearing that needs to be filled. Remember we too are God's chosen ones.

Prayer: Father God, give us courage to stand for you and compassion to plead on behalf of others who have wandered from your ways.

